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OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

21 June 1955

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 29-55

SUBJECT: Ambassador Riddleberger's Views on Yugoslavia

1. There follows a brief summary of Ambassador Riddleberger's remarks last week before the NSC Planning Board and the Board of National Estimates with respect to the Yugoslav situation. Although Mr. Riddleberger went over a good deal of ground previously covered in his cables and press interviews, these debriefings did develop some points of probable interest to the Board.

2. Background of the Soviet-Yugoslav Talks. Ambassador Riddleberger was convinced the meeting was arranged late in the game and at Soviet initiative. The tip-off was a difference in Tito's statements to Mr. Riddleberger on the timing of proposed talks with the West on two occasions preceeding announcement of the Soviet visit. There had been indications of a possible meeting for many months, but the Ambassador had anticipated a lower level gathering. The Soviet talks came after the satisfactory events of 1954, including signature of the Balkan Pact and the Trieste settlement, which had been followed, however, by the beginning of talk about avoiding involvement in either Bloc beginning early this year.

3. General Impressions of the Soviet Visit. Mr. Riddleberger confirmed that the Yugoslavs were not favorably impressed by the Belgrade visit on two main grounds. First, Khrushchev's "country cousin" approach made a bad impression on Yugoslav officials in view of the formal atmosphere which has grown up around what might be called Tito's "court", and second, they voiced some doubts about the capacity of the Soviet leadership. While the Yugoslavs questioned the Soviets' ability to negotiate with the West, Mr. Riddleberger was not willing to go that far and noted the Yugoslavs also displayed some lack of confidence. Most of all, the Yugoslavs were struck by the gap which had grown between their thinking and

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that of the Soviets. This was illustrated by the effect of Khrushchev's airport speech and their shock at his reported reference to the possibility of Communist gains after World War III. He noted that Khrushchev was definitely the boss for purposes of the Belgrade conference. Reliable Yugoslav sources indicated that he appeared to have the authority to make decisions on the spot, noting that he did not have to refer to Moscow during the last days of the conference in order to settle points in disagreement. Bulganin was definitely number two man on this occasion. The Ambassador did not believe one could conclude from this that Khrushchev had achieved full power over his colleagues, but it probably meant the rulers have put him in charge of the Belgrade operation.

4. Soviet and Yugoslav Objectives at Belgrade. Soviet objectives at the conference included, above all, (1) using it to "throw sand in the West's gear box". (2) They sought to employ it as a platform outside the orbit from which to gain support for their policies. (3) They aimed at strengthening the ties between the two Communist parties. The Soviets wanted the visit to have an effect on the Communist rank and file in Yugoslavia in order to further their long-term objective of leading the Yugoslavs away from the present situation to a re-establishment of party relationships. Mr. Riddleberger believed a trend might develop in this direction. The clue would be the degree to which Muscovite or Cominform Communists were permitted freedom of action in Yugoslavia. (4) The Soviets were also promoting the neutralization of Germany. On the other hand, the Yugoslavs hoped to lay the ground work for future long-term gains in the Satellites. In addition, they wanted to promote their own brand of neutralism.

5. Results of Talks. The Yugoslavs think the talks came off rather well. They cite the statement in the communique about different roads to socialism as proof and believe the section on ideology will in time have quite an effect on the Satellites. The Ambassador attributed the paragraph on Red China and Formosa to the Yugoslav theory that there can be "more than one Church". In this view there will be three centers of Communist doctrine--Moscow, Peiping and Belgrade. The Yugoslavs had stressed in their propaganda before and during the meeting that it was not ideological, but rather inter-state in character. Mr. Riddleberger was convinced, however, that ideological questions were discussed at the Brioni sessions. He felt one would have to reserve judgement on the question of whether any secret agreements were made on the side which were not reflected in the communique or otherwise revealed.

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6. The section on trade, Mr. Riddleberger said, was not pleasing to the U.S., but he had received a formal interpretation from the Yugoslav Foreign Office that it was directed at the Soviet boycott and not at weakening controls on strategic materials. The Yugoslavs were for the present, at least, staying with us on strategic controls. He noted there was not too much incentive to sell to the East when markets were available in the West. Mikoyan stated negotiating with Vukomanovic-Tempo on economic matters, including the question of compensation for Yugoslav losses after the 1948 break, but these talks were not concluded. They are expected to be resumed later. He thought compensation accounts may actually turn out to be pretty closely balanced. While the Yugoslavs do feel they have a real claim resulting from considerable consequential damage, it is not a major grievance against the USSR and they would not want to settle it at the expense of Western aid.

7. A very important result was that the Yugoslavs had now revealed they were clearly against the neutralization of Germany. This was a marked change, the Ambassador noted, since April talks between Tito and the British Ambassador.

8. Balkan Pact Cooperation. The Turks, who were described as men in a hurry, are dissatisfied with the progress on Balkan Pact planning and feel the Yugoslavs are dragging their heels. On the other hand, the Greeks are not too displeased and cooperation seems good between Greece and Yugoslavia. However, any evidence of a Yugoslav rapprochement with Bulgaria would shake the Pact. Albania did not figure in the Soviet-Yugoslav talks, so far as is known. The Ambassador noted that Balkan Pact planning had not gone as far as we had hoped it would. Furthermore, he was not too optimistic on the prospects for formal military planning with the West on Yugoslavia's part.

9. Yugoslav Relations with the West. The Ambassador thought a reappraisal of US policy toward Yugoslavia was in order both from the standpoint of political relations and US operations. He noted that the UK and French Ambassadors were more optimistic than either the Turkish envoy or himself. Nevertheless, he believes Tito will think very seriously before cutting Yugoslavia's ties with the West. In the military field, he said many of our aid difficulties would have arisen anyway, as a consequence of moving from the initial planning and supply sphere to the follow-up period. It was fortuitous that these problems arose at the same time as the Soviet visit. Specifically, he said Air Force cooperation was pretty good, but the Yugoslav Army was more stubborn, probably reflecting such factors as its Partisan experience, pride and ignorance. The Army was not used to questionnaires and inspections, as required

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by the aid program, and did not like to reveal it had not solved its own problems. In addition, the Army leadership found it hard to plan ahead. The Ambassador felt in this connection that it was unfortunate there was no Annual Review for Yugoslavia, since this type of exercise might help solve problems of this kind. Other problems include differences on the best utilization for military aid and over divergencies in military doctrine. We are also not happy over their force dispositions.

10. He believed the Yugoslavs would not object if US troops were stationed in Trieste as a result of the redeployment from Austria. They seemed to regard Trieste as a closed issue and were starting to build up port facilities at Rijeka (Fiume) as an alternative. This would be relatively simple since the city already had comprable rail connections to points in Yugoslavia and Central Europe.

11. Internal Conditions in Yugoslavia. Although Tito has a kind of popularity, the regime could not win any free election. On the question of a possible successor to Tito, the Ambassador noted that about ten people run the country and that in the event of his death or incapacity a committee would probably take over. There was no evidence to back up rumors of a split in the top leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party. A number of pro and anti-Cominform individuals in Belgrade had been detained for the period of the Soviet visit so as to avoid the possibility of either side making trouble.

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